



United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

Washington, DC 20240

IN REPLY REFER TO:
7202.4-OS-2018-00303

October 31, 2019

Via email: 45776-17512261@requests.muckrock.com

Jimmy Tobias
MuckRock – Pacific Standard Magazine
DEPT MR 43775
411A Highland Avenue
Somerville, MA 02144-2516

Dear Mr. Tobias:

On November 12, 2017, you filed a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request seeking the following:

All correspondence, including letters, memos, as well as emails and attachments, sent or received by:

Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke
David Bernhardt
Scott Hommel
James Cason
Doug Domenech
Katharine MacGregor
Scott Cameron
Heather Swift

[C]ontain one or more of the following words: "Joel Clement" and/or "Clement". This request pertains to communications sent or received between March 1, 2017 and the date this request is processed.

We acknowledged your request on December 20, 2017 and advised you of your fee status under the FOIA. We are writing today to respond to your request on behalf of the Office of the Secretary. We are releasing one file consisting of 33 pages. Of those 33 pages, there are six documents containing redactions. Redactions are described below. This completes our response to your request.

Portions of the documents may be redacted pursuant to Exemption 6 of the FOIA (5 U.S.C. § 552(b)(6)) because they fit certain categories of information:

E-mail Addresses

Exemption 6 allows an agency to withhold “personnel and medical files and similar files the disclosure of which would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy.” The courts have held that the phrase “similar files” involves all information that applies to a particular person. Hertzberg v. Veneman, 273 F. Supp. 2d 67, 85 n.11 (D.D.C. 2003).

To determine whether releasing requested information would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy, we are required to perform a “balancing test.” This means that we must weigh the individual’s right to privacy against the public’s right to disclosure.

- (1) First, we must determine whether the individual has a discernable privacy interest in the information that has been requested.
- (2) Next, we must determine whether release of this information would serve “the public interest generally” (i.e., would “shed light on the performance of the agency’s statutory duties”).
- (3) Finally, we must determine whether the public interest in disclosure is greater than the privacy interest of the individual in withholding.

The information that we are withholding consists of personal information, and we have determined that the individuals to whom this information pertains have a substantial privacy interest in it. Additionally, we have determined that the disclosure of this information would shed little or no light on the performance of the agency’s statutory duties and that, on balance, the public interest to be served by its disclosure does not outweigh the privacy interest of the individuals in question, in withholding it. Nat'l Ass'n of Retired Fed. Employees v. Horner, 879 F.2d 873, 879 (D.C. Cir. 1989).

In summation, we have determined that release of the information that we have withheld would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of the privacy of these individuals, and that it therefore may be withheld, pursuant to Exemption 6.

Tony Irish, Attorney-Advisor, in the Office of the Solicitor, was consulted in reaching this decision. Ryan McQuighan, Office of the Secretary Government Information Specialist, is responsible for making this decision.

For your information, Congress excluded three discrete categories of law enforcement and national security records from the requirements of the FOIA. See 5 U.S.C. § 552(c). This response is limited to records that are subject to the requirements of the FOIA. This is a standard notification that is given to all our requesters and should not be taken as an indication that excluded records do, or do not, exist.

If you have any questions regarding any of the issues discussed in this letter, you may contact Ryan McQuighan by phone at 202-513-0765, by fax at 202-219-2374, by e-mail at os_foia@ios.doi.gov, or by mail at U.S. Department of the Interior, 1849 C St, NW, MS-7328

MIB, Washington, D.C. 20240. You also may seek dispute resolution services from our acting FOIA Public Liaison, Tony Irish, at the phone and address above.

Sincerely,

Ryan McQuighan
Office of the Secretary
Government Information Specialist